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State Dept. review completed

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Washington, D.C. 20505

8 March 1985

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT : Deteriorating Greek-Turkish Relations -- An Update

1. This memo updates [redacted] the increasing contentiousness of Greek-Turkish relations. [redacted] we noted that the new Greek defense doctrine identifying Turkey as the key threat had set off a chain reaction of alarming military and diplomatic moves by both sides. Since then, Greece has officially notified NATO that it will not participate in any NATO exercises until the Limnos Island issue is resolved. Meanwhile, Turkey has [redacted] stepped up its diplomatic campaign against Greece. In short, Greek-Turkish relations have continued to deteriorate over the last month, although we still do not foresee imminent conflict.

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2. Since our last memo, Athens has kept up its diplomatic campaign against the "Turkish threat".

-- Most recently in its announcement of the purchase of new fighter aircraft from France and the United States, Athens again highlighted the Turkish threat, [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by the Office of European Analysis. Questions and comments may be directed to the Chief, Western Europe Division, [redacted]

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3. Turkish perceptions of Greek intentions have caused Ankara to reevaluate its policy toward Greece.

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-- In talks with Western diplomats about Greece, the Turks have maintained the tough tone we first noted in late January. One prominent foreign ministry representative told US Embassy officials last month, for example, that Turkey was at a "crossroads" as a result of the new Greek defense doctrine and that its leaders "cannot play deaf to it" any longer. He went on to warn that wars are started by misperceptions complicated by strong national feelings.

-- In mid-February, Ankara held a closed but highly publicized "seminar" on civil-military cooperation in which President Evren, Prime Minister Ozal, General Urug (Chief of the General Staff), the military force commanders, and several cabinet members participated.

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Although the US Embassy in Athens reports no "systematic discrimination" against the Moslems in Thrace, the depth of Turkish public feeling on minority problems -- as shown in the recent outrage over treatment of Turks in Bulgaria -- makes the issue a genuinely volatile one.

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- [redacted]
- Foreign Minister Halefoglu recently wrote a letter to Secretary Shultz in which he referred to the "close cooperation" between the Greek Cypriots and Armenian terrorist groups. These allegations reflect in large measure commonly-held Turkish suspicions of Greek complicity in anti-Turkish terrorism, but they also probably represent an attempt to focus attention on an issue of particular concern to the US.

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4. [redacted]

[redacted] Ankara has launched a campaign to bar Greece from NATO's Defense Planning Committee -- possibly a first step in a move to oust Greece from NATO altogether. The campaign is in apparent response not only to Greece's new defense doctrine but also Athens' increasingly strident effort to gain NATO acceptance of its right to militarize Limnos Island.

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- Athens has now officially notified NATO that it will not participate in any NATO exercises unless the Limnos issue is resolved or unless all exercises in the Aegean are temporarily cancelled pending resolution of the problem.
- In response, the Turkish press has been questioning Greece's NATO role, and Turkish diplomats have recently been raising the issue in their bilateral contacts with the Allies.
- In what has become a relatively typical presentation, for example, a Turkish foreign ministry official last month told his American counterparts that "the Turks are waiting quite impatiently to see what the reaction of their NATO allies is going to be to Papandreou's new defense initiative..." He went on to say that it is time for the United States to "do what Turkey cannot do alone -- restrain Papandreou."

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- [redacted]
- According to the Turkish daily Tercuman, government and defense sources say that during his visit to the US next month, Prime Minister Ozal intends to "dwell heavily on Greece's attitude (toward Turkey and NATO) and express to President Reagan Turkey's view that the United States must take action."
 - Given the intensity, frequency, and variety of levels at which the issue is being discussed, we believe Ankara may be quite serious in trying to oust Greece from NATO's Defense Planning Committee. We expect that Defense Minister Yavuzturk and Prime Minister Ozal will raise the issue during their upcoming visits. They are alert to our

* [redacted] Turkish claims of Greek Cypriot involvement in Armenian terrorism, although we know that Armenians use Cyprus as a transit point. Greek Cypriot authorities are keenly sensitive to the terrorist problem and closely monitor the activities of terrorist suspects.

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concern about the fate of US bases in Greece and may hint at favorable consideration of a US contingency request to transfer facilities from Greece to Turkey.

5. Barring Athens from NATO planning meetings would clearly signal Allied displeasure with Greece's disruptive tactics, but it could also work to Papandreou's advantage politically and further exacerbate Greek-Turkish relations.

- With parliamentary elections likely in May or June, Papandreou almost certainly would exploit NATO action against Greece -- particularly if the population perceives it as a direct result of Turkish pressure.
- New Democracy opposition leaders have told US officials that this kind of public dispute -- in which Papandreou would cast himself as the champion of Greek independence -- would damage conservative prospects in the election.
- In fact, we believe most Greeks, including those who are pro-West, would probably connect any NATO action at this juncture with the current Turkish diplomatic offensive and would view the action as confirming their suspicions of NATO favoritism toward Turkey.

6. Meanwhile, developments on Cyprus continue to contribute to tensions between the two sides.

- The Turkish Cypriots, with the support of Ankara, are continuing to push ahead with their state-building measures. A referendum on a new constitution is set for later this month or early April, and parliamentary elections are scheduled for 23 June. Turkish Cypriot leader Denktash also hopes to hold "presidential" elections in April or May. Whether justified or not, the continuing consolidation of the north will make concessions from the Greek Cypriots difficult, if not impossible.
- The domestic political crisis in the south is also likely to have a negative impact on the peace process. President Kyprianou is stinging from the joint Communist-Conservative censure motion on his handling of the Cyprus issue. He is undoubtedly looking for a way out of his current predicament, but we strongly doubt he will sign the draft agreement presented at the UN-sponsored summit in January as it now stands. In fact, continued pressure from Communist and conservative party leaders could prompt Kyprianou to seek formal alliances with the Socialists and others who favor a harder position on Cyprus. And if pushed to the wall, Kyprianou still has the option of calling for a referendum on the draft agreement -- an exercise which in our view would damage prospects for a UN settlement by revealing widespread popular support for hardline positions.

7. We do not expect an improvement in Greek-Turkish relations over the coming weeks. As a result, the potential for a miscalculation leading to conflict will remain higher than usual.

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[REDACTED]

-- Athens and Ankara managed to avoid an escalation of hostilities after the Greek-Turkish border incident early last month in which a small number of Turkish soldiers allegedly crossed the border in Thrace and opened fire in response to verbal taunts from a Greek patrol. We are less confident that cool heads will prevail in the future, however, if mutual suspicions continue to grow at the pace we have noted since the beginning of the year.

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